

PREPAREDNESS PHASE PRESS RELEASE
(e.g., at least 3-5 days before a hurricane's predicted landfall)
FOR PEOPLE WITH DOMESTIC ANIMALS



From the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

Prepare to take care of your animals in an emergency.

Pets and livestock depend on their owners for care, before, during, and after a disaster. Owners should anticipate their animal's needs and prepare to fill them in advance, while stores, roads, phones, electricity, water, and other services function and while travel remains safe. To prepare for emergencies, assume that normal services will be interrupted and that you will have to care for your animals on your own.

1. Be prepared for conditions to worsen.

Even if evacuation seems unlikely, be sure to have on-hand both what you and your pet will need to stay put for at least three days and a plan, including a well-stocked **Pet ID Pack** and **Go Kit**, ready to take with you immediately, if necessary. Among the supplies you should have ready-to-go are ownership and health records, food and medications for three days, and restraints – a collar and leash as well as an appropriate crate or cage for each pet. Emergency shelters are likely to refuse pets whose owners do not provide these essentials.

2. If you evacuate, take your pets.

The single most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to take them with you when you evacuate. In a disaster animals left behind can easily be injured, lost or killed. Animals left inside your home can escape through windows or walls damaged in a disaster. Animals left tied up outside or turned loose to fend for themselves will be very vulnerable to exposure, starvation, predators, contaminated food or water, and other hazards. Take them with you.

- When a disaster has been forecast, if you leave, even if you think that you may be gone only for a few hours, take your animals. Once you leave, you have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area, and you may not be able to go back for your pets.
- If you rely on public transportation, prepare a backup. Buses will likely change their normal routes and may be unable to accommodate pets.
- Act early. If you think it just "might" be wise to leave, don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. An unnecessary trip is far better than waiting too long to leave safely with your pets. If you wait to be evacuated by emergency personnel, you may be told to leave your pets behind.

3. Find a safe place ahead of time.

Shelters for people generally don't accept pets (except for service animals); so, you must plan ahead to ensure that you, your family and pets will have a safe place to stay. Don't wait until disaster strikes to figure out where to go.

- Public pounds or shelters should be your last resort. They have limited resources, and they are likely to be stretched to their limit during an emergency.
- Make a list of pet-friendly places that are a safe distance away, and keep the list handy. Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to learn if they accept pets. Can "no pet" policies be waived in an emergency? Ask about restrictions on the number, size, and species permitted or special fees or deposits that you would need to be prepared to pay. Call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave your home.
- Check with friends, family, or others outside your immediate area. Ask if they would be able to shelter you and your animals. If you have more than one pet, you might have to be prepared to board them in separate households.
- Make a list of kennels or other boarding facilities that might be able to shelter animals in emergencies. Include 24-hour telephone numbers.
- Be sure that a "buddy" – someone far enough away to be safe in an emergency that affects you – knows about your animals and plans for them.

4. For more information – on-line advice on specific types of animals, preparing ID Packs and Go Kits, where to go, and what to bring with you – see <http://www.dem.ri.gov/animals/>